

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-13 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15

CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 AID-05 IGA-02 L-03 DODE-00

/077 W

-----040946Z 064700 /22

P R 031610Z JAN 77

FM AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0603

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGUI

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

C O N F I D E N T I A L YAOUNDE 0023

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MILI, PINS, ACOM, MASS, CM, UR, CT, EK

SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH PRESIDENT AHIDJO

REF: (A) STATE 307467 (NOTAL);(B) STATE 310518; (C) STATE
305437 (NOTAL; (D) STATE 304365 (NOTAL); (E) STATE 313181
(NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY: DURING 45-MINUTE CONVERSTATION ON JANUARY 3,
PRESIDENT AHIDJO DISCUSSED RUSSIAN THREAT IN CENTRAL AFRICA,
EXPRESSED PLEASURE AT PRESIDENT FORD'S UNBLOCKING OF UNESCO DUES
AND APPRECIATION FOR POSSIBLY INCREASED DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE
AND POSSIBLE SECURITY ASSISTANCE. END SUMMARY.

2. DURING NEW YEAR'S RECEPTION FOR DIPLOMATIC COPRS, I TOLD
PRESIDENT AHIDJO THAT I HAD SOME GOOD NEWS FOR HIM ON TWO
SEPARATE AID REQUESTS. AS RESULT, I WAS INVITED TO CALL ON
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HIM AT NOON TODAY. I BEGAN BY EXPRESSING REGRETS THAT I COULD
NOT RESPOND TO HIS SUMMONS OF DECEMBER 4 BECAUSE I HAD
JUST STARTED ON TOUR OF NORTHWEST PROVINCE, WHICH INCLUDED
SEVERAL PUBLIC LECTURES, OF WHICH HE HAD HEARD. FRENCH
AMBASSADOR HAD INFORMED ME THAT AHIDJO HAD ON SAME DAY DISCUSSED
RUSSIAN THREAT IN EQUATORIAL GUINEA WITH HIM, SO THAT I ASSUMED
HE WANTED US ASSESSMENT OF SOVIET AND CUBAN DESIGNS IN CENTRAL

AFRICA (REF A).

3. AT BEGINNING OS SESSION, AHIDJO ACCEPTED MY OFFER TO DISCUSS DETAILS OF ASSESSMENT WITH SECRETARY GENERAL OF PRESIDENCY EBOUA. TOWARD MIDDLE, HOWEVER, HE INQUIRED ABOUT ASSESSMENT DIRECTLY AND SOVIET ACTIVITIES TOOK UP ABOUT HALF OF TIME. I PROVIDED HIGHLIGHTS OF PARAS 3 THROUGH 9 OF REF A. AHIDJO RESPONDED BY SAYING HE HOPEDUS WOULD TURN OUT TO BE RIGHT WITH RESPECT TO RELATIVELY LOW PRIORITY ACCORDED AFRICA, AND ESPECIALLY CENTRAL AFRICA, BY SOVIETS. ALTHOUGH HE IS AWARE OF GREATER SOVIET AND CUBAN PRESENCE IN CONGO THAN IN EQUATORIAL GUINEA, HE IS MORE CONCERNED ABOUT EG, FOR TWO MAIN REASONS: (A) MACIAS IS ERRATIC AND POSSIBLY CRAZY, SO THAT THERE IS A TOTAL VACUUM IN EG; (A) BY CONTRAST WITH CONGO, EG HAS NO MANAGERS OR CADRES, SO THAT RUSSIANS (FYI: AHIDJO RARELY REFERS TO THEM AS SOVIETS END FYI) COULD MOVE IN ANY TIME THEY CHOOSE.

4. AHIDJO AGREED THAT RUSSIANS APPROACH REGION ON A PIECEMEAL BASIS, TAKING ADVANTAGE OF WHATEVER OPPORTUNITIES THEY RECOGNIZE. IN THAT CONTEXT, HE MENTIONED A CONVERSATION HE HAD WITH THEN PRESIDENT BOKASSA OF THEN CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC AT TIME OF BOKASSA'S CHRISTENING OF CENTRAL AFRICA'S ONLY MERCHANT VESSEL IN DOUALA EARLIER THIS YEAR. BOKASSA CONSIDERED THAT RUSSIANS' INTERVENTION IN ANGOLA SHOWED THEIR STRENGTH, WHILE US AID CUTOFF SHOWED AMERICAN WEAKNESS, FROM WHICH BOKASSA CONCLUDED THAT HE WOULD DO BETTER TO DEAL WITH RUSSIANS THAN US. AHIDJO OF COURSE NEITHER TAKES BOKASSA SERIOUSLY NOR AGREED WITH HIM.

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5. IN SAME CONTEXT, AHIDJO SAID THAT RUSSIANS WERE PROBABLY BEHIND GENERAL GOWON'S OUSTER IN NIGERIA. GOWON HAD INTIMATED SOMETHING ALONG THESE LINES TO HIM WHEN THEY MET IN CAMEROON SHORTLY BEFORE AND AGAIN DURING KAMPALA OAU SUMMIT WHEN OTHER YOUNG OFFICERS MOVED AGAINST GOWON.

6. WHEN I MENTIONED DEBLOCKING OF UNESCO CONTRIBUTION, AHIDJO SAID THAT HE HAD READ ABOUT IT AND CONSIDERED IT VERY IMPORTANT. I EXPRESSED OUR APPRECIATION FOR CAMEROON'S EFFORTS DESIGNED TO MAKE THIS ACTION POSSIBLE.

7. FINALLY, I INFORMED AHIDJO IN GENERAL TERMS OF INTENTION TO INCLUDE IN THE FY 1978 CONGRESSIONAL PRESENTATION AN ITEM FOR SUPPORT OF TRANSCAM III (REF E). I EXPLAINED THE DESIRABILITY OF KEEPING EMBASSY INFORMED OF STATUS OF FEASIBILITY WORK AND NEED FOR JUSTIFYING SUPPORT IN TERMS OF UPGRADING LIVES OF RURAL POOR IN REGION INCLUDING NORTHERN CAMEROON CAE AND CHAD. HE PROVIDED SEVERAL EXAMPLES OF HOW RAILROAD ALREADY HELPS RURAL POOR NOT ONLY OF AREAS MENTIONED ABOVE, BUT IN WHOLE OF

CAMEROON AND NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES.

8. REMAINDER OF TIME WAS TAKEN UP BY PRESIDENT'S REFLECTIONS ON
INCOMING CARTER ADMINISTRATION. HE WAS GENERALLY PLEASED
BY PRIOR EXPERIENCE OF NEW TEAM.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: SPHERE OF INFLUENCE, MILITARY ASSISTANCE
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 03-Jan-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977YAOUND00023
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770002-1082
Format: TEL
From: YAOUNDE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770184/aaaacvzhz.tel
Line Count: 122
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: cdd4e4dd-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 STATE 307467, 77 STATE 310518, 77 STATE 7
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29-Nov-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3670722
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CONVERSATION WITH PRESIDENT AHIDJO
TAGS: PFOR, MILI, PINS, ACOM, MASS, CM, UR, CT, EK, (AHIDJO, AHMADOU)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/cdd4e4dd-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009